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# THE CONDOR A MAGAZINE OF WESTERN ORNITHOLOGY.



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## SIERRA FORMS ON THE COAST OF SONOMA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

By JOSEPH MAILLIARD

WITH TWO PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR

ON May 11, 1908, I started with my son for a week's collecting trip to a point some 90 miles by rail and stage north of San Francisco, principally for the purpose of ascertaining which form of chickadee would be found breeding there, I expecting to find something very close to *Parus rufescens*—which expectation was fully realized. During the stormy week of our stay at this place, which was on the ridge some 1400 to 1600 feet high just back of Fort Ross, Sonoma County, but two or three miles from the ocean shore, I was greatly surprised to find breeding there birds which one associates only with the Sierra region or the foothills thereof, and not at all with the coast proper. H. H. Sheldon, in *THE CONDOR*, Vol. X, No. 3, has described the finding of nests of the Monterey Hermit Thrush (*Hylocichla g. slevini*) and Western Golden-crowned Kinglet (*Regulus s. olivaceus*) in this same locality; but in addition to these species I found Audubon Warbler (*Dendroica auduboni*) and the Black-throated Gray Warbler (*Dendroica nigrescens*) apparently breeding, and found a junco (*Junco h. thurberi*?) with nests and young. No actual nests of the two above warblers were discovered and only male birds were taken, but from their actions and notes, and from the number of Audubon Warblers, at any rate, flitting about the higher parts of the tall Douglas spruce trees—both sexes being seen—there is but little room for doubt as to their being present for any other purposes than breeding. They certainly did not act like or have the appearance of migrants—and at this season they would of necessity be late ones if in this category—in spite of the fact that these birds are not supposed to breed on or near the ocean shore.

Another surprise was the fact that the *Cyanocitta* of this region—which we might call the South Fork of the Gualala River to the mouth of the Russian River—is vastly different from the Steller Jay of the more northern coast and the Coast Jay

(*Cyanocitta s. carbonacea*) of Marin County, being strikingly similar to the Blue-fronted Jay (*Cyanocitta s. frontalis*) of the Sierras. This is especially strange from the fact that the redwood and Douglas spruce forest of western Sonoma County is practically a continuation of the fir forest of the more northern coast, differing comparatively slightly in humidity and temperature from that part of it where the dark form of *stelleri* is found. Apparently there should be a slight, regular, continuous gradation from the *stelleri* of the North to the form named by Grinnell *carbonacea* or Coast Jay, which extends from Marin down the coast to



MONTEREY HERMIT THRUSH ON NEST; SONOMA COUNTY,  
CALIFORNIA, MAY 17, 1908

Monterey County. But instead of this on the Sonoma coast we find a big break, and here, almost on the northern boundary of *carbonacea*—some sixty or seventy miles north of San Francisco, as the crow flies—is a form closely resembling, if not identical with the *frontalis* of the Sierra region, much lighter in color than the form north of its habitat and of that but a few miles south of it, tho the character of the climate and forest which it inhabits has changed but little either way. Breeding specimens of this light form were obtained, and a nest with young discovered.

A couple of days after our arrival in this locality we were joined by H. H. Sheldon and his friend "Fy" Taylor, who had come on a fishing and oological expedition. On the morning of May 15 the boys started in a buggy for a trip

by way of private ranch roads to the North Fork of the Gualala, Sheldon kindly volunteering to take my collecting pistol and try to pick up a few desiderata on the way. When about half way down the grade from the top of the ridge to the South Fork he espied a desirable specimen and jumped out to try and get it. A few yards from the road he ran into a Monterey Hermit Thrush (*Hylocichla g. slevini*) in plain sight on its nest, which proved to contain but one egg. The nest was built in a large dead branch, some twenty feet long, of a bay tree, which had apparently been broken from its parent by the weight of snow in an unusual snowstorm that oc-

curred in 1907, as no wind could have reached so deep in the woods, and was lying almost horizontally with the butt end in the bottom of a little stream and the tip lying against the bank. Mr. Sheldon and his companion left for home the next day, but bequeathed the nest to me. As my time was limited to the 18th it was necessary to visit the nest on the 17th, even tho the complement of eggs might not have been laid. The bird was setting and in full view when the spot was reached, and creeping along the bank, trying to hypnotize the bird with the eye while feeling the way with my feet I set up the camera at a guess of ten feet with the idea in view of a possible enlargement should a good negative result, focussed and took a time exposure. Cautiously moving along with my heart in my throat I tried again at eight feet, timing the light with an actinometer. And yet again at six feet, and the bird never moved! The smallest stop was used and the exposure was *six minutes* in these somber woods, during which I do not believe the bird took her frightened eyes off the camera for an instant. The accompanying photo is an enlargement of this six foot exposure. Gradually creeping along inch by inch, keeping my head covered, and looking under the camera and focussing cloth, I was setting up and focussing at *four* feet when my heel dislodged a stone which fell with a slight crash down the bank and the bird flew. Too bad! I would have liked to hide and wait for her return to the nest, but time pressed and we were far from home, so I took a couple of plates of the nest and eggs in situ before adding them to our collection. It was a great disappointment to me not to have had a telephoto lens along, as here was a fine chance to use one, but an error of a friend at the last moment left me without such an aid.



NEST AND EGGS OF MONTEREY HERMIT THRUSH

*San Geronimo, California.*

## A BIT OF EARLY CALIFORNIA NATURAL HISTORY

By FRANK S. DAGGETT

I RECENTLY came across a set of twenty volumes, published by the author, Dr. John Trusler, entitled "The Habitable World Described". Volume I was published in 1788 and the last one in 1795. They contain many plates and a great amount of information from countries then but little known. Volume VII